Authority NND969035
By WBD NARA Date 5/4/00

OPTIONAL MAY NOT GSA

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

SECRET

→ Mr. Thayer - EA/ACA

I concur — in fact, I find reasoning entirely persuasive. SVL

TO : U - Mr. Abramowitz

DATE: February 19, 1970

FROM : EA/ACA - Harry E. T. Thayer

SUBJECT: Warsaw Meeting: Shootdown of U.S. Drone

8/19/70

1. We feel that if the Chinese raise the question of the presence of the U.S. drone over Hainan Island Ambassador Stoessel should only take note of the Chinese comment and that he should not apologize.

Political Rationale Regarding China

-- As far as I know, we have never apologized to the Chinese in the past for aerial reconnaissance incidents.

-- If we apologize in this case, we are putting ourselves in the position both of having to explain past cases, and, more importantly, of having to apologize in future cases. If we were certain that any future cases would similarly involve an accidental overflight, such an apology might be appropriate, but future overflights might not be accidental.

-- An apology in this case might also lead the Chinese to press us to take the next step of foreswearing such acts for the future.

-- A U.S. apology to the Chinese at Warsaw would, I agree, be well received by the Chinese. But such an apology would only be a gesture, and as such a minor gain for the Chinese. An apology would not alter the Chinese view of the drone's presence as a hostile act, and the Chinese, in any event, would consider the apology to be a hypocritical gesture having nothing to do with the basic U.S. attitude regarding reconnaissance.

-- An added but not central consideration is that the Chinese have indicated by their propaganda treatment of this incident to date that they do not plan to make a major issue of the incident. If they do raise it at Warsaw, we must assume at this point that they would not press for a U.S. apology or other statement, but rather would just wish to make the point and probably would not expect the U.S. side to reply to the complaint.

POL Chinese - U

EA/ACA : H E T Thayer : lgr

SECRET

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Authority NND969035
By MBD NARA Date 5/4/00

Aerial Reconnaissance Policy Rationale

-- It is the long-standing policy of the U.S. intelligence community, aside from certain cases such as the Powers' U-2 incident and flights over Cuba, not to comment in any fashion on this type of incident. An acknowledgement to the Chinese would be a significant departure from this policy.

-- We do not yet have the facts regarding the exact circumstances of the overflight.

2. Ambassador Brown has seen this memorandum and concurs. I have also discussed this today with INR/DDC - Mr. McAfee, who concurs in substance.

cc: J - Mr. Monjo
INR/DDC - Mr. McAfee

EA/ACA:HETThayer:lgr x-20708
2-19-70